

RECREATION AND PLACES OF INTEREST³⁵

National Areas³⁶

Nebraska has two national forest areas with hand-planted trees: the Bessey Ranger District of the Nebraska National Forest in Blaine and Thomas counties, and the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest in Cherry County. The Pine Ridge Ranger District of the Nebraska National Forest in Dawes and Sioux counties contains native ponderosa pine trees. The U.S. Forest Service also administers the Oglala National Grassland in northwest Nebraska. Within it is Toadstool Geologic Park, a moonscape of eroded badlands containing fossil trackways that are 30 million years old. The Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, an archaeological site containing the remains of more than 600 prehistoric bison, also is located within the grassland.

Agate Fossil Beds National Monument in Sioux County contains animal fossils. Homestead National Monument of America near Beatrice was built on one of the first pieces of land claimed under the U.S. Homestead Act of 1862. Scotts Bluff National Monument near Scottsbluff is an 800-foot bluff that was a landmark for pioneers on the Oregon Trail. Chimney Rock National Historic Site, a 500-foot spire carved by the elements, is near Bayard. It also served as a landmark for Oregon Trail travelers. The Niobrara National Scenic River is a popular canoeing river. The Missouri/Niobrara/Verdigre Creek National Recreational Rivers and the Missouri National Recreational River offer land and water recreation and views of the waterways similar to those the Lewis and Clark expedition saw as they crossed the Great Plains.

State Areas³⁷

Nebraska's eight state parks are Eugene T. Mahoney and Platte River in Cass County, Smith Falls in Cherry County, Chadron in Dawes County, Fort Robinson in Dawes and Sioux counties, Indian Cave in Nemaha and Richardson counties, Niobrara in Knox County and Ponca in Dixon County.

Arbor Lodge in Otoe County is one of the state's most popular historical parks. J. Sterling Morton, who founded Arbor Day, built a four-room house in 1855 that was transformed into an elegant 52-room mansion. More than 200 varieties of trees are planted on the estate's grounds.

Other Nebraska historical parks include:

- Ash Hollow (Garden County), a rest stop for Oregon Trail travelers
- Ashfall Fossil Beds (Antelope County), a working paleontological dig of ancient rhinoceroses
- Fort Atkinson (Washington County), the first U.S. military post built west of the Missouri River

³⁵ Information for this section compiled from the following sources: Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Nebraska Indian Commission; National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior; U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Nebraska State Historical Society.

³⁶ For more information about the areas in Nebraska administered by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, see Pages 106-107 and 157-158.

³⁷ For more information on state areas, see Page 656.

- Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch (Cherry County), a working Sandhills cattle ranch donated by Nebraska's first female U.S. senator
- Buffalo Bill Ranch (Lincoln County), the home of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Army scout and showman
- Champion Mill (Chase County), the last water-powered mill to operate in Nebraska
- Fort Hartsuff (Valley County), a restored 1870s military post
- Fort Kearny (Kearney County), an Army frontier outpost to guard the Overland Trail
- Rock Creek Station (Jefferson County), a stop on the Pony Express route where Wild Bill Hickok killed David McCanles

Other Places of Interest

Thousands of travelers pass through Nebraska each year on highways that follow the Oregon, California and Mormon trails. In some places, ruts from the pioneers' wagon wheels can be seen from the road.

The Fontenelle Forest Nature Center at Bellevue, site of Nebraska's oldest settlement, was established as a trading post by John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company around 1832.

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo has the world's largest indoor rain forest, the world's largest indoor desert, the Kingdoms of the Seas aquarium, a nocturnal exhibit and indoor swamp, and an IMAX theater. The zoo also operates a conservation park and wildlife safari near Ashland. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History has the world's largest diorama of whooping cranes and Sandhill cranes in the world, a plantetarium and the Lied Super Screen Theatre.

The State Capitol in Lincoln is considered an outstanding example of modern architecture.

Willa Cather, Nebraska's most famous writer, is honored with a pioneer memorial at Red Cloud.

Lake McConaughy, Nebraska's largest lake, is a popular recreational area. Campers and hikers visit the rugged Pine Ridge area in northwestern Nebraska. Other scenic spots are found along the Platte, Niobrara, Big Blue, Loup, Republican, Dismal and Missouri rivers. Fishing, hunting, horse racing and rodeos also are popular pastimes in Nebraska.

Special Events

One of the state's largest events is Nebraskaland Days. The weeklong celebration, which features parades, an old-time Wild West show and a rodeo, is held each June in North Platte. Other rodeos include the Burwell Rodeo and Omaha's Ak-Sar-Ben (Nebraska spelled backwards) World Championship Rodeo and Stock Show. The Nebraska State Fair is held in Lincoln in late August and early September.

Many of the state's ethnic groups hold annual festivals that feature native costumes, dances and foods. Among the most popular events are Germanfest in Syracuse, the Swedish Festival in Stromsburg, the Danish Festival in Dannebrog and the National Czech

Festival in Wilber. Many people attend powwows of the Ponca Tribe in Niobrara, the Omaha Tribe in Macy, the Santee Sioux Tribe in Niobrara and the Winnebago Tribe in Winnebago. Other events include Oregon Trail Days in Gering, Sandhill Crane Migration Days and Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island, and Kool-Aid Days in Hastings.



The Lied Jungle at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo

 **Uniquely Nebraskan**

Husker Football³⁸

For 40 years, the University of Nebraska has ranked among the most dominant powers in college football. Since Coach Bob Devaney arrived in 1962, the Cornhuskers have become one of the most recognizable symbols of the state.

Since winning its first game on Nov. 27, 1890, the Nebraska football program has amassed more than 780 victories. Since 1970, Nebraska has won five national championships. Under the direction of Coach Tom Osborne, the Huskers posted the best five-year record in NCAA football history — 60-3 from 1993 to 1997, including three unbeaten and untied seasons.

Husker football fans are widely known as some of the most devoted fans in sports. By the end of the 2005 season, there had been 275 consecutive sellouts of Memorial Stadium — an NCAA record.

Besides football, Nebraska has fielded national championship teams in men's gymnastics, volleyball and women's indoor track and bowling. With several College World Series appearances, most recently in 2005, both the baseball and softball programs have excelled at a national level. The men's track, women's gymnastics, wrestling and rifle teams have all earned top-10 finishes at the national championships in recent years.

For more information, visit the World Wide Web site — www.huskers.com.

³⁸ Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Sports Information Office. Photo courtesy of University of Nebraska Alumni Association.



Special Attractions in Nebraska

Nebraska's special attractions include (clockwise, from top left) Ashfall State Historical Park near Royal, Chimney Rock National Historic Site near Bayard, American Indian dancing demonstrations and the historic Meriwether Lewis dredge near Brownville.

Attendance at Selected Nebraska Attractions, 2005³⁹

Attraction	Location	Attendance ⁴⁰
Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.....	Harrison.....	14,211
Aksarben Aquarium.....	Gretna.....	50,000
Arbor Day Farm.....	Nebraska City.....	211,566
Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum.....	Nebraska City.....	132,650
Art, Museum of Nebraska.....	Kearney.....	21,974
Ash Hollow State Historical Park.....	Lewellen.....	20,000
Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park.....	Royal.....	17,300
Bowling Sandhills Ranch State Historical Park, Arthur.....	Merriman.....	6,849
Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge.....	Fort Calhoun.....	25,000
Boys Town Visitor Center/Father Flanagan's Boys Town.....	Boys Town.....	255,906
Branched Oak State Recreation Area.....	Malcolm.....	650,000
Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park and State Recreational Area.....	North Platte.....	51,448
Calamus Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Burwell.....	435,470
Capitol Building, State.....	Lincoln.....	72,000
Carhenge.....	Alliance.....	60,000*
Cather State Historic Site, Willa.....	Red Cloud.....	11,685
Chadron State Park.....	Chadron.....	219,230
Champion Mill State Historical Park.....	Champion.....	5,179
Children's Museum, Lincoln.....	Lincoln.....	141,000
Children's Museum, Omaha.....	Omaha.....	173,987*
Chimney Rock National Historic Site and Visitors Center.....	Bayard.....	NR*
Cottonmill Park.....	Kearney.....	228,000*
Courthouse Rock and Jail Rock.....	Bridgeport.....	NR*
Davis Creek Reservoir.....	North Loup.....	54,800
DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge.....	Blair.....	234,239
Edgerton Explorit Center.....	Aurora.....	13,298
El Museo Latino.....	Omaha.....	58,900
Enders State Recreation Area.....	Enders.....	46,760
Folsom Children's Zoo and Botanical Gardens.....	Lincoln.....	145,000
Ford Birthsite and Gardens, Gerald R.....	Omaha.....	12,000
Forest, Samuel R. McKelvie National.....	Nenzel.....	800*
Fort Atkinson State Historical Park.....	Fort Calhoun.....	39,995
Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park.....	Burwell.....	20,000
Fort Kearny State Historical Park.....	Kearney.....	55,600
Fort Kearny State Recreation Area.....	Kearney.....	93,600
Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge.....	Valentine.....	120,000
Fort Robinson Museum.....	Crawford.....	NR*
Fort Robinson State Park.....	Crawford.....	361,230
Front Street/Cowboy Museum.....	Ogallala.....	83,900
Fur Trade, Museum of the.....	Chadron.....	39,528
Genoa Indian School Museum.....	Genoa.....	2,255
Governor's Mansion.....	Lincoln.....	NR*
Grassland, Oglala National.....	Crawford.....	36,000*
Great Platte River Road Archway Monument.....	Kearney.....	147,000*
Harlan County Reservoir.....	Alma.....	424,394
Hastings Museum/Lied Theatre/J.M. McDonald Planetarium.....	Hastings.....	70,885
Henry Doorly Zoo.....	Omaha.....	1,347,853
History, Museum of Nebraska.....	Lincoln.....	28,298*
Holy Family Shrine.....	Gretna.....	42,000
Homestead National Monument of America.....	Beatrice.....	52,494
Indian Cave State Park.....	Shubert.....	170,000
Johnson Lake State Recreation Area.....	Elwood.....	196,225
Joslyn Art Museum.....	Omaha.....	239,334
Lake Maloney State Recreation Area.....	North Platte.....	80,000
Lake McConaughy/Lake Ogallala State Recreation Areas.....	Ogallala.....	800,000
Lake Minatare State Recreation Area.....	Minatare.....	75,000
Lauritzen Gardens.....	Omaha.....	106,961
Lewis and Clark Lake State Recreation Area.....	Crofton.....	270,000
Lied Center for the Performing Arts.....	Lincoln.....	120,635
Louisville Lakes State Recreation Area.....	Louisville.....	595,000
Mahoney State Park, Eugene T.....	Ashland.....	1,047,900

³⁹ Attractions selected include state historical sites, state parks, state historical parks, federal areas and non-commercial attractions reporting annual attendance of 35,000 or higher. Other attractions were selected based on their historical or geographical significance.

⁴⁰ Source: Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Figures represent attendance reported by the attractions themselves for all of 2005. "NR" stands for "not reporting." Those numbers designated with an asterisk (*) are reported attendance numbers in 2003 because 2005 numbers were not available.

Attendance at Selected Nebraska Attractions, 2005 (Cont'd.)

Attraction	Location	Attendance
Medicine Creek State Recreation Area.....	Cambridge.....	51,113
Merritt Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Valentine.....	112,294
Missouri River History Museum and Meriwether Lewis Dredge.....	Brownville.....	5,000
Mormon Island State Recreation Area.....	Grand Island.....	170,050
Neihardt State Historic Site, John G.....	Bancroft.....	1,716
Niobrara National Scenic River.....	Valentine.....	58,750
Niobrara State Park.....	Niobrara.....	130,350
Omaha Community Playhouse.....	Omaha.....	103,791
Pioneer Village, Harold Warp.....	Minden.....	59,052*
Pioneers Park.....	Lincoln.....	450,000
Pioneers Park Nature Center.....	Lincoln.....	81,400
Plainsman Museum.....	Aurora.....	3,501
Platte River State Park.....	Louisville.....	545,035
Ponca State Park.....	Ponca.....	615,550
Pony Express Station.....	Gothenburg.....	23,467
Red Willow State Recreation Area.....	McCook.....	65,000
Schramm Park State Recreation Area.....	Gretna.....	80,000
Scotts Bluff National Monument.....	Gering.....	99,565
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden.....	Lincoln.....	48,342
Sherman Reservoir State Recreation Area.....	Loup City.....	43,125
Sod House Museum.....	Gothenburg.....	25,000
Strategic Air and Space Museum.....	Ashland.....	179,528
Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer.....	Grand Island.....	65,500
Sutherland State Recreation Area.....	Sutherland.....	50,000
Swanson Lake State Recreation Area.....	Trenton.....	25,775
Toadstool Geological Park.....	Crawford.....	12,000
Two Rivers State Recreation Area.....	Venice.....	272,806
University of Nebraska State Museum.....	Lincoln.....	55,840
Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.....	Valentine.....	40,000*
Victoria Springs State Recreation Area.....	Anselmo.....	35,000
Walnut Creek Lake and Recreation Area.....	Papillion.....	275,000
Wehrspann Lake at Chalco Hills Recreation Area.....	Omaha.....	400,000
Western Heritage Museum, Durham.....	Omaha.....	104,019
Wildlife Safari, Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park and.....	Ashland.....	86,157
Willow Creek State Recreation Area.....	Pierce.....	190,000
Windmill State Recreation Area.....	Gibbon.....	51,500